

[Captain Simpson]

[??]

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1900 words

CAPTAIN SMITH H. SIMPSON

A Pioneer from New York From the sidewalks of New York to the Gila monster's den From the falls of Minnehaha to the Lakes of Ponchartrain, He fought the savage Indian In the hills and on the plain.

To paraphrase the old Church hymn and the marching song of the leather-necked U.S. Marines, such has been the range of adventure of one New York boy who finally settled in Taos, helped Kit Carson fight Indians in western New Mexico and Arizona, and helped the Territory of New Mexico and the village of Taos to struggle through the strenuous and sometime painful period of transition from the old Spanish rule and the misrule of the Mexican Republic, to the more settled conditions of the twentieth century, when the three races, Indians, Spanish-American and "Anglos", with their old leaders and their old prejudices and grudges both buried in the sunbaked adobe soil of New Mexico, can now live in peace and amity, hardly to be ruffled by the [?] rantings of some small calibre politicians at election times. [C. 18 - N Mex?]

One of the men who contributed to the growth of a more friendly feeling between the two dominant races by his uncompromising patriotism and personal probity was Captain Smith

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H. Simpson, a native of New York City who found his way to Taos and New Mexico long before the artists and the sight-seeing tourists ever heard of the place.

Smith H. Simpson was born in New York City, May 8, 1836, the son of Charles Henry Simpson, a commission merchant of New York City. His paternal grandfather was a Revolutionary Revolutionary soldier and crossed the Delaware with Washington and took part in the Battle of Trenton. This grandfather afterwards married a Miss M. A. Williams and settled in New York City, where later they both died and were buried in one of the city cemeteries.

Young Smith lost both parents through an epidemic epidemic of cholera in 1849 when he was only thirteen years of age. In this same year he was apprenticed by relatives to James H. Chilton, a manufacturing chemist of New York City, in whose employment he remained for a year or two.

Just at this time came the reports of the discovery of gold in California, that faraway and almost unknown land acquired from Mexico a few short years before.

No doubt the city bred boy, working and playing about the streets of New York and seeing men and sailing ships leaving the docks of the East River for a long arduous arduous trip around the Horn to the new El Dorado, was fired with the same spirit of adventure that prompted his ancestors to leave England and brave the perils of the Atlantic to seek 3 their fortunes in the American Colonies.

Leaving New York City, his first venturing during his years of his young manhood, took him to Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington. He worked at various employments to pay expenses and finally reached New Orleans, where he obtained employment with the Quarter-master's Department of the Navy.

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He remained there until 1852, where his travels in the line of duty took him from New Orleans to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, to Montana and down the Missouri and finally to Santa Fe.

While in St. Louis he met Upton D. Tendruac, Chief Clerk for Major Samuel Dusenberry, Chief Quarter-master for the Army in New Mexico. Tendruac employed young Simpson as second clerk, and they came to Santa Fe, where Smith H. worked from September, 1853, until October, 1854. This seems to have been the deciding event in the career of young Simpson.

Leaving the area for a while, he came to Taos shortly before the Civil War, and tried to settle down to the more uneventful life of a farmer and merchant. But except for short absences while in Government work, practically all the rest of his life was spent in New Mexico and after the Civil War, he made Taos his home until the time of his death.

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In 1855 the Ute War in northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Utah broke out and drew Simpson into active service. In the spring of that year he enlisted as a Commissary Sergeant and served until July, when the [trouble?] was over and he was discharged.

Returning to the Quarter-master's Department of the Army, he was placed on special duty and ran a government express for the army and delivered supplies to army posts all over the eastern slope of the Rockies from Montana to New Mexico. He continued in this service for over two years until September, 1857. During the winter of 1857-58 he took a vacation and spent about six months in Mexico City.

Returning to the states in the spring of 1858, he made a trip back to his old home in New York City to visit relatives and, then ran into an old army comrade, A.W. Reynolds, who persuaded him to take a trip to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, outside of St. Paul.

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He again re-entered the service and for awhile was in command of a steamboat carrying supplies to Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, now the site of the Federal penitentiary.

Returning to Santa Fe, he served as second clerk under Captain Wm. Van Bublein until the fall of 1859 but remained in Santa Fe until the spring of 1860.

Just when Simpson first saw Taos is not known, though he evidently had visited the town in the course of his 5 military duties. Deciding to leave the army and settle down, he moved to Taos in the spring of 1860, bought some land south of town and engaged in farming and stock-raising until the spring of 1863.

He seemed fated to get no rest. Just as he was fairly settled as a peaceful farmer at Taos and was thinking of getting married and building a home, he was again called from the plow, like the Cincinnatus of old, to command troops in his country's wars.

Prompted no doubt by the withdrawal of Federal troops from New Mexico and Arizona, to take part in the Civil War in the Southern States further east, the Navajoes and Apaches in western New Mexico as well as and Simpson [was?] were called back into active service. this this time as he was a Captain of Scouts and Spies . Having , having under his command loyal Indians and veteran ex-soldiers.

He served in this capacity from 1863 to 1866. His campaigns brought him in contact with the famous Kit Carson and carried him all [over?] the southwestern part of the state and down the Gila River to the White River and San Carlos reservations and to the vicinity of Pheonix Phoenix .

The Civil War being finally ended and the volunteer troops being replaced by regulars of the U.S. Army, the Indians finally gave up their raids for a time at least, and Captain Simpson and his troop were finally ordered back to Albuquerque, where they were mustered out in 6 September, [1864?]. Captain Simpson had been wounded at various

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times during the three years of fighting Indians but not seriously incapacitated by any of his wounds.

He again returned to Taos, hoping that his army days were over and that he could now return to the peaceful life of a farmer. He did so, and engaged in farming until 1872 when the influx of new people and money from the East presented fresh opportunities and he went into the land real estate business, buying and selling land in the Spanish grants in the Taos Valley.

Captain Simpson first became acquainted with Kit Carson in the early '50's on one of his trips to Taos on army business for the Quarter-master's Department and these two strong outstanding men, though of contrasting temperaments, soon became strong friends and served together in various campaigns against the hostile Indians between 1855 and 1862.

The friendship was renewed after Simpson's return to Taos in 1866, and became so strong, that when Carson lay on his death bed at Ft. Lyon, Colorado, almost his last words were "Tell Simpson and Botts (Carson's clerk) that I want to be buried at Taos." His trust was not misplaced and in 1869, about a year after Carson's death, Captain Simpson, through his Masonic and G.A.R. affiliations, was instrumental in having Carson's remains brought by ox-team 7 from Ft. Lyon, himself going to La Veta and guiding the caravan the remainder of the way to Taos, Carson was finally and permanently buried in the cemetery in Taos now named for him.

A year or two later, Captain Simpson was instrumental in getting Carleton Post No. 3, G.A.R. of Santa Fe, to erect a monument over Carson's grave and construct a fence around the lot.

Captain Simpson continued in the farming and land business [until about?] 1900 when he gradually retired. Later he devoted his time to his patriotic activities. He erected a flag pole in the center of the Plaza of Taos and for years personally attended to the duty of

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raising and lowering the flag each morning and evening. He was active in promoting the observance of Memorial Day and often lectured to the school children on patriotic subjects.

After returning from his Indian campaigns In 1866, and finally hanging up his sword for good and all, Captain Simpson married Miss Josefita Valdez, daughter of a prominent Spanish-American family and built the house later occupied by one of his daughters, Mrs. Ben. C. Randall. His wife died in 1907. Six children were born of this marriage, however, to carry on the traditions.

Anna--Mrs. Anna Cloutier, now married to Epemenio Martinez and now living at Wagon Mound.

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Henry--Of Wagon Mound, New Mexico.

Stefania--(or Stall) Mrs. Ben G. Randall, now living at Las Vegas, New Mexico.

Maggie--Mrs. Albert Gusdorf. Living in Taos.

Samuel--Glove, Arizona,

He lived long enough to hold several of his grand children on his knees and there are now several of his great grand children living in Taos, and Las Vegas, New Mexico and Los Angeles, California.

La Reivsta Revista de Taos (Taos Review), at the time of his death, wrote a very eulogistic article on the career of Captain Simpson and testified to the esteem in which he was held by both Anglo and Spanish-American people of Taos. From old timers in Taos who knew him in his later years, between 1900 and 1916. He is described as a man of medium height, and stocky build. He wore a mustache and imperial and his gray hair rather long after the fashion of Civil War times. In appearance he was a typical Civil War veteran. Not much is related of humorous incidents in his career. He was abrupt in his manner and

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brusque, sometimes violent and profane in his speech and very positive in his opinions. The few people remaining who knew him in his earlier and more active days testify to his rugged manliness and innate kindness of heart and ascribe any roughness in his manners or speech to his 9 long years spent in bossing bull-whackers and freight teamsters in his old army days.

Captain Simpson died April 3, 1916, being just a month less than eighty years of age. His funeral was held three days later and conducted by Bent Lodge, No. 1, A.F. & A.M. of Taos and Carleton Post No. 3, G.A.R. of Santa Fe and by common consent all the store closed and the whole town turned out for the funeral. He is buried in Kit Carson Cemetery near his old friend and comrade of Indian fighting days.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Factual date to 1895 compiled from Illustrated History of New Mexico. Lewis Publishing Company--Chicago, 1895.

Report of his funeral, names of children, from La Rivssta Revista de Taos, April 7, 1915.

Personal characteristics from conversations with R. E. Anderson, John E. Dunn, Enrique Gonzales end others.

The writer has been hampered in tho collection of information about this subject by the lack of cooperation on the part of the family of the Captain. This accounts for the scarcity of information us to his personal characteristics [?] for which I have had to rely on outsiders.

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